

**HISTORICAL
DICTIONARY OF THE
COMORO ISLANDS**

**Martin Ottenheimer
and
Harriet Ottenheimer**

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Africa

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INTRODUCTION

Travelers, traders, and scholars have written about the Comoro Islands for more than five hundred years. They have produced a body of literature that describes the physical conditions, history, people, and cultures of the archipelago, and there has been a substantial growth in this literature in recent times. Undoubtedly this increase in output has been the result of a mounting interest in affairs of countries surrounding the Indian Ocean in general and a recognition that the Comoro Islands occupy a strategic position in the western Indian Ocean area. This recent interest has drawn attention of scholars from a number of different countries to the Comoro Islands and there is also a growing literature by Comorian scholars trained in various disciplines and writing about their homeland. A quick glance at the bibliography, however, will reveal that the literature about the Comoros is predominantly French. This is due to France's political dominance for many years over the Islands.

Of the recent publications concerning the Comoro Islands the journal *Études Océan Indien* needs to be specially mentioned. First published in 1982 by the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales in Paris, this journal has become a major outlet for scholarship on historical, linguistic, and social data of the Comoros. It is now an indispensable resource for scholarly information on the islands. Another recent publication that may be of interest to some readers is *Jana na Leo*. It is primarily concerned with articles on social life of the island of Mahoré and is published in Mamoudzou, Mahoré.

This bibliography is not a complete listing of the works about the Comoro Islands. Theses and dissertations have been deliberately omitted from the bibliography since they are often very narrow in scope and difficult to obtain. Fictional works by Comorians,

although they may be expressive of Comorian life or depict aspects of Comorian culture, have also been omitted from the bibliography because of the historical emphasis of the dictionary. Book reviews, international agency reports, government reports, and newspaper articles have also been omitted. Nonetheless, the bibliography provides a large number of materials written about the Comoro Islands. To assist the reader in consulting the bibliography the entries have been placed under the following sub-headings:

- Bibliographies
- Economics
- General References
- Geography and Geology
- History and Archaeology
- Language
- Plants and Animals
- Culture and Society

Each of the above subdivisions contains entries alphabetized by author. The History and Archaeology section has been further subdivided into two separately alphabetized sections: (1) General Research and (2) Voyagers' Narratives. The comments by travellers from previous centuries have been separated out from the published archaeological and historical research. This organization is intended to make the bibliography a more useful primary reference.

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